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FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1738
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1645
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0737
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0742
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0481
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0478
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0184
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEILB/NCTC WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2128

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SUBJECT: MAOISTS IN JHARKHAND STRIKE AT ANOTHER LOCAL FOOTBALL MATCH,
KILLING EIGHTEEN

REF: KOLKATA 00074

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On October 27, Maoist rebels shot and killed eighteen people after a football match, including the youngest son of Jharkhand's former Chief Minister Babulal Marandi. The attack occurred in the village of Giridih near the Jharkhand-Bihar border. The GOI and Jharkhand government has responded by ordering the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to launch a "clean-up" operation against Maoists in Jharkhand, as well as in parts of neighboring West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. In West Bengal on October 26, one woman was killed in a landmine attack allegedly orchestrated by the Maoists in the West Midnapur district. Jharkhand's government, which hasn't spent available funds to counter the Maoists, continues to demonstrate a lack of an organized response to the Maoist problem in the state. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Maoist rebels killed eighteen people, including Anup Marandi, the youngest son of former Chief Minister and leader of the Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (Democratic) Babulal Marandi. The attack took place after a football match in a village near Giridih, which borders the state of Bihar. The attack occurred during the post-match prize distribution ceremony near midnight.

According to media reports, approximately fifteen armed Maoists came to a village in Giridih to look for Anup Marandi's brother, Nanulal Marandi. Nanulal Marandi apparently recognized the danger and managed to escape from the area. According to news reports, the Maoists then opened fire indiscriminately.

Eyewitnesses claimed that some of the Maoists were dressed in CRPF uniforms. The incident was very similar to that of the killing of Jamshedpur MP Sunil Mahto and three others on March 4, 2007, when Mahto was participating in a local football match prize distribution ceremony (reftel). Politicians in Jharkhand are often invited to attend sporting events and hand out prizes afterwards.

¶3. (SBU) The response from the Jharkhand government so far has been unorganized. A senior Jharkhand police official told Post that he thought the attackers may have fled to Bihar. When we asked about ongoing efforts made by the State to curb Maoist activity, the official said that out of a total fund of Rs. 20.94 billion (approx. USD 520 million) provided by the Jharkhand Government during the last three fiscal years, the Home Department of the State, which is responsible for security, has spent only Rs. 847.2 million (approx. USD 21.5 million). The remaining funds had been returned without explanation.

¶4. (SBU) Following the attack, the Jharkhand government, along

with the GOI, asked the CRPF to launch "Operation Vikram" to "clean-up" the Maoists operating in 18 of Jharkhand's 24 districts. Five companies of paramilitary forces (nearly 600 personnel) are conducting raids in Giridih district and in neighboring Bihar's Jamui district. Police sources told Post that Jharkhand officials are also seeking the help of neighboring states to conduct these operations.

¶ 15. (SBU) On October 26 in neighboring West Bengal, a woman was killed and another critically injured in the crossfire between Maoists and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in West Bengal's West Midnapore district. The shooting occurred after a landmine blast by the Maoists near Tangbheda forest in West Midnapore. Although a CRPF jeep narrowly escaped the explosion, a tourist bus passing by sustained damage and then was caught in the crossfire between the Maoists and paramilitary troopers. The district police have arrested three men in connection with the blast.

¶ 16. (SBU) Comment: The Jharkhand government's response to the attack underscores the continuing lack of preparedness of the state to effectively combat Maoists operating there. It is not a question of money - in fact it appears that funds intended for anti-Maoist activities are going unused. Even if the attackers are found, the manner and brazenness of the killing show that Maoists can operate unfettered in Jharkhand, and that the state apparatus has yet to come up with a solution to combat this problem. In the past, Maoists have generally targeted law enforcement or government officials. This attack on civilians was somewhat unique, and may indicate that there was a specific reason for the attack.

JARDINE